632 652 ment, one to the State treasurer, and one to the general accounting office of the State. The first two deal with income payable to Federal or State government, while the third deals with all the municipal accounts.

UNOFFICIAL ORGANIZATIONS

467 665 The functioning of government in Cherán is often affected by unofficial organizations and informal groups. At the time of the study, the most influential of such groups was one affiliated with the CTM (*Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanas*). Probably this same group also functioned as a local branch of the official government party, the PRM (*Partido Revolucionario Mexicano*).

The actual functioning and organization of these groups was quite informal. Considerable difference of opinion existed in the town as to the desirability of such organizations, many holding that they are disruptive in character. Others, the so-called progressives, felt that such organization is necessary if the town is to receive its fair share of Government aid. Between these conflicting viewpoints could arise violent disagreement. With great reasonableness, however, the "progressives" organized only informally. Those who felt the town should be organized in the fashion mentioned, named officers and got themselves recognized by the State branch of the CTM. When documents arrive which need action or signature, the members of the group talk them over informally in house-to-house visits and send the necessary replies. There are no meetings or overt evidence of the organization. From the standpoint of union and party officials in the State capital, the town is organized; from the standpoint of the majority of the inhabitants of Cherán, it is not.

661 579 The development of this informal organization grew out of another and earlier organization that had gotten the town a bad name. In 1940–41, within a short time any investigator soon heard of the *zafarrancho*, the disorder or riot. Evidently a landmark, many events were dated by reference to this affair. To learn about it, however, was not easy. Many people refused to talk about it at all; others suggested that it was unwise to talk about it. Only after many months was the story finally secured in

661 confidential talks, and even then it is doubtful
579 whether all the details were abstracted from unwilling witnesses. The story as learned does not seem to call for all the secrecy involved, and this gives weight to the suspicion that the truth of the underlying factors was not secured and that these factors are more operative today than anyone would admit.

At the height of the agrarian movement in Michoacán, the control of the *municipio* was secured by a group of some 30 men calling themselves "agrarians (*agraristas*)." Everyone seemed agreed that there was no genuine agrarian problem in Cherán and that the members of the group had no desire for land but only for power. Perpetuating themselves in office, members of this group at first were tolerated but gradually became more and more overbearing in their attitude. When people finally began to show signs of discontent, the "agrarians" asked the State authorities for aid on the grounds that the people were rebellious. As a result, a detachment of soldiers was stationed in Cherán under the command of a lieutenant to enforce order and the authority of the municipal officials. The young lieutenant apparently soon saw that his troops were perpetuating an illegal and unpopular group in power and tried to get his superiors to make a real investigation, but with no success. The tyranny of the ruling group now became unbearable.

The climax came when a drunken member of the group began firing his revolver on the main streets and threatening people. One of the soldiers endeavored to arrest the man and was shot and killed. The lieutenant now succeeded in having the situation thoroughly investigated, and as a result the detachment of soldiers was withdrawn. The following day occurred the *zafarrancho*. Some 10 to 12 of the "agrarians" were killed and the rest fled the town. In 1940, they were still living in exile in nearby towns.

664 For a time following this, Cherán was
665 governed by a *presidente militar*, an appointed
467 army officer. Technically, this was true in 1940, but the commander rarely even visited the town and all troops had been removed some time before. The present "progressive" government has effectively been in power since the affair. This is also the group which has

681 flicts and illegal acts which brought official action were few (outside of property suits, which are not considered here). The following is the calendar of cases placed on the records from October 9 to December 3.

[683] October 9. A man knocked down a child and hurt her head. He was placed in jail overnight.

681 October 12. A man was drunk and disor-
689 derly. He was placed in jail (no term indicated).

October 15. A man was drunk and disorderly. He was placed in jail overnight.

October 16. A drunken man broke onto a house. He was placed in jail until the eighteenth.

October 22. A woman was "disobedient" (probably disorderly conduct of some sort).
681 She was placed in jail overnight.

[684] November 3. A man raped a young woman,
[183] his second offense. He was placed in jail until the 10th. It should be observed that according to Cherán ideas a properly brought up girl whose parents looked after her as they should would never have been in a situation where rape would be possible.

[685] December 3. A man "abused confidence" by trying to register a piece of land as his own which actually belonged to his mother-in-law. He was put in jail overnight.

The above cases do not include those which involved fines of less than one peso nor cases which came before the judge.

579 Despite the fact that Cherán has a bad reputation in other towns for violence, there seem to be relatively few serious fights. Drunks often fall to fisticuffs, usually ineffective, but knife fights are rare and the use of firearms is even more unusual. In ordinary times there is probably not more than one killing a year. However, a very serious affair occurred shortly before the close of the study.

At a wedding the new priest appeared after the drinking was well under way. He reproved the people soundly for their excessive drinking and urged them to go home. One of the men, who was already very drunk, took the priest's words to heart and started home. Crossing the bridge to the *barrio* of Parícutin, he was shot from ambush and killed. That night the *ronda* went from house to house asking for certain persons, but up to the time the study closed

579 nothing had been done. Probably more than personal motives lay back of the killing, but it was impossible to discover them.

583 Marriage customs are another frequent source of conflicts reaching the mayor. Ordinarily a boy "kidnaps" the girl he is going to marry. The kidnapping is public and usually nothing is done about it, but the boy may be forced to marry the girl if he does not go through with the ceremony in a reasonable time. Occasionally, though, the girl's relatives make so much commotion that the mayor has to act. [683] If the kidnapping has been "legitimate," that is, the boy intends to marry the girl, usually the men participating in the kidnapping are thrown in jail for 2 or 3 hours and released with an admonition, almost certainly given with tongue in cheek.

583 684 In other cases the matter may become more serious, especially if it is exploited by the girl. One example will illustrate the situation.

A boy stopped to talk with a girl of dubious morals. When he left, she followed him, saying she was going home with him. The boy ran away and hid. Later in the day the girl's parents came to the mayor and claimed the boy had kidnapped the girl. The boy was ordered

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RELIGION AND CEREMONIAL

771 Religion in Cherán revolves about the church and the formalized practices and beliefs associated with it. In addition, there is a lively belief in witchcraft, plus a body of miscellaneous and unorganized beliefs and customs. In the main, the organized ceremonials, aside from those associated with life crises, which are dealt with in another section, are linked with the church and are group or community affairs. The ceremonials and rituals connected with witchcraft and miscellaneous beliefs are primarily individual in character and are not organized in any way, although there is a certain gradation between the two types of ceremonial with respect to organization.

794 796 The church ceremonials and rituals are of four types. Central to the system are those church rituals and ceremonies which follow more or less conventional Mexican Catholic lines and are wholly under the direction of the

[text continues on middle of p. 116b]

stormy agrarian period (1921-26), when the agrarian hero was, by word of mouth, "touching the sensitive parts" of the Tarascan peasantry.

The second method, astute intrigue, follows fairly familiar Machiavellian lines but with a self-conscious sophistication and articulateness that would have delighted the immortal Florentine (Machiavelli, 1942). Intrigue has always been a major, time-consuming political activity in Duraxno, and astuteness (astucia) is a personal quality much admired by the cunning leaders. It is true that politics is often infused by the characteristic desperation of peasants struggling for land with a newly activated lust for power; old agrarian fighters recall that after the land reform in 1924 they felt like the "recently arrived." But Duraxno politics also has the character for its participants of a fascinating game to be played astutely, in accordance with certain rules and a high sense of art.

The third principal method, human organization, received great impetus during the twenties through the formation of regional committees and of "shock brigades," organized on Leninist principles. Leaders today conceive of their role as one of "organizing" and "controlling" the pueblo and the region. The cacique maintains a high threshhold of internal discipline, but the relations between the other leaders are horizontal, loose, and shifting. The importance of relations with higher organizations has already been described.

The fourth method, the "diagnostic trait" of violence, assumed the stature of a civil war during the agrarian period when indigenous patterns of blood vengeance and friendship loyalty combined with the ideological justifications of the reform struggle. During the twenty-year factional period from 1926 to 1948, Duraxno and the region attained a unique notoriety in the state. Twenty-three cross-checked politically motivated homicides and several times more woundings and armed encounters took place in the three "bad years" from 1937 to 1939 alone. Leaders and ordinary citizens recognize violence as a normal aspect of politics, but today many are sick of it, and the incidence has greatly dropped. Assassinations are usually carried out by the more "valiant" members of a party and are generally directed against the minor figures of opposing parties. The number of active or potential peasant "fighters" in Duraxno has always ranged between ten and forty and has been a significant power factor in region and state. The power basis of politics is a comparatively obvious factor here.

Much of what we have said here would apply to other forms of caciquismo, including larger, non-Indian, conservative areas, such as Spain. In the Boasian spirit, however, we have limited our inductions to one Mexican Indian cacicazgo. In 1896 Franz Boas wrote: "When we have cleared up the history of a single culture . . . we can then investigate in how far the same causes were at work in the development of other cultures."

NOTES

1. Fourteen months of fieldwork were conducted between March, 1955, and July, 1956, under the auspices of the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Mexican government.

2. Nonparticipants have illegally rented their plots, or are boycotting the cacique, or have withdrawn from politics from fear or weariness.

3. Leaders of opposition factions in the village stand ready to switch and offer a revolutionizing support to a leader who challenges a state or national machine. This automatic village-level support of an opposition leader partially explains the cataclysmic success of Lazaro Cardenas when, in 1934, he turned against national "strong man" Calles.